



Maricopa County Animal Care & Control



DON'T LET THE CAT OUT!

An indoor
cat lives a longer,
healthier life than a
cat that lives outdoors.

WHY IS THAT?

- Indoor cats never face the danger of other cats ready to fight for love or territory.
- Indoor cats don't get run over by cars.
- Indoor cats aren't exposed to diseases and parasites common to outdoor cats.
- Indoor cats don't get sick from eating spoiled food or poison.

OUTDOOR CATS GO TO THE VETERINER MORE OFTEN!

- Outdoor cats are exposed to fleas, ticks, worms, abscesses and cuts that require treatment.

HOW DO I KNOW IF MY CAT IS SICK?

- Symptoms of a sick cat include a dull coat, diarrhea and weight loss. These are seen more often in outdoor cats than indoor cats.

MY CAT RAN AWAY FROM HOME, WHAT DO I DO?

- Protect your cat before it runs away. Buy it a collar a pet identification tag. If someone finds your cat they will know where to return it.

WILL MY CAT BE HAPPY IF I KEEP IT INDOORS?

- Cats raised indoors are perfectly content with their world. They feel loved and cared for.

LETTING THE CAT OUT... OR NOT

Thanks to the creation and marketing of cat litter since the mid 1940's, more and more cats are staying in becoming indoors-only pets, that is. As such, cats are generally leading longer lives.

The average indoor cat lives to be 10 years old, and many of us know felines who are older than 20. Conversely, outdoor-only cats survive for an average of only 2 years in that situation.

Our homes offer a safer, healthier environment than life on the street. Just think - no ticks and fleas unless a family dog brings them in; no tangling with rabid raccoons, aromatic skunks or hungry coyotes, and no one on-ones with moving vehicles. There's no doubt about it indoors is safest!

Yet, when we choose to make our cats indoors-only companions, we have a responsibility

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to provide the stimulation that nature provides automatically. Scratching and climbing posts become trees; interactive toys become hunted birds, bugs and field mice. A rotating array of cat playthings provides excitement, unpredictability and exercise.

TAKING THEM TO THE STREET

That said, many cat lovers still prefer to share the Great Outdoors with their feline friends. Happily, there are several ways to minimize the risks.

First, while vaccinations are important to indoor cats, they are critical to the health of cats allowed outside. The soil of a garden or yard can harbor diseases, for months in some cases, spread by stray, unvaccinated cats. And rabies has spread to much of the country, transmitted mainly through altercations with wildlife such as foxes, raccoons and bats.

The safest ways to allow your cat to enjoy some time outdoors is to either harness-train him or her and go for walks together or to provide a screened-in enclosure or fenced-in yard topped with cat-proof netting.

HOLD THE LINE

Harness training, like many things, is easiest taught during kitten hood. But some adult cats can acclimate to it. Choose a figure-8 or H-type harness and make sure it fits well. (The fit is right if you can barely get your finger between the cat and the harness.) At first, put the harness on for a few minutes at a time, preferably just before mealtime so that the cat associates it with something positive. Repeat this several times a day. When the cat begins to ignore the harness, attach the leash and let him or

her drag it around for a few more short sessions; stay nearby in case the leash catches on something. The next step is to pick up the leash and follow the cat around the house. This will allow the cat to get used to a human following behind prior to providing direction with gentle pulling on the leash.

When your cat is comfortable taking light direction, proceed to a quiet area outdoors. Keep your first sessions short, frequent and upbeat; little food rewards come in handy. If you are leaving your property, keep your eyes peeled for off-leash dogs, in-line skaters or bicyclists who could put Tabby in danger or give her a scare.

HEY, FENCE ME IN!

Since outdoor enclosures are usually homemade, they come in all shapes and sizes. For durability, chicken wire or wire hardware cloth - secured around a simple wood frame - is preferable to ordinary window screening. The most successful structures usually feature climbing and resting furniture inside. A shaded area is necessary for warm or hot weather.

Whether you choose an outdoor cat enclosure or add cat-proof netting to the top of traditional fencing, remember that they are safest used only when you are at home and outdoors with your cats or able to check on them often. Whether pet theft, which only takes a few moments, is perpetrated by pesky neighborhood kids or an organized group rounding up animals to sell, the resulting heartache is the same. And don't forget, a microchip, tattoo or ID tag might be the very thing to reunite you and your family feline if precautions fail.